

## **Appendix B:**

# **Statement of Overriding Considerations**



# Statement of Overriding Considerations

CEQA requires the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) to balance the benefits of the 2001 Regional Transportation Plan (2001 RTP) against its unavoidable environmental effects in determining whether to approve the project. Since the EIR identifies significant impacts of the 2001 RTP that cannot feasibly be mitigated to below a level of significance, MTC must state in writing its specific reasons for approving the project in a “statement of overriding considerations” pursuant to sections 15043 and 15093 of the CEQA Guidelines. This Statement of Overriding Considerations sets forth the specific reasons supporting MTC’s action in approving the 2001 RTP, based on this EIR and other information in the record of proceedings

MTC has examined a reasonable range of alternatives to the 2001 RTP. Based on this examination, MTC has determined that none of the alternatives meets the following three criteria: (1) achieves the project objectives; (2) is environmentally preferable; and (3) is reasonably feasible.

CEQA does not require lead agencies to analyze “beneficial impacts” in an EIR. Rather, EIRs focus on potential “significant effects on the environment” defined to be “adverse.” (Pub. Resources Code, § 21068.) Nevertheless, decision-makers may be aided by information about project benefits. These benefits can be cited, if necessary, in a statement of overriding considerations. (CEQA Guidelines, § 15093.)

The 2001 RTP is intended to guide future transportation improvements for the Bay Area in the context of six broad policy goals:

- Improve mobility for persons and freight;
- Promote safety for system users;
- Promote equity for system users;
- Enhance sensitivity to the environment;
- Support the region's economic vitality; and,
- Support community vitality in the region.

This EIR examined the environmental impacts of the 2001 RTP in the areas of Transportation, Air Quality, Energy, Geology and Seismicity, Biological Resources, Water Resources, Visual Resources, Noise, Cultural Resources, Population, Housing, and Social Environment, and Land Use. MTC has identified significant environmental impacts that cannot be mitigated as shown in Table S-1 and Appendix A. This EIR also examined four alternatives:

- No Project- CEQA mandated alternative
- Alternative 1 – System Management
- Alternative 2 – Blueprint 1

- Alternative 3 – Blueprint 2.

While Alternative 2 (System Management) was found to have the least environmental impact, all the above alternatives have significant impacts that cannot be mitigated. MTC's decision to adopt the 2001 RTP rather than any of the alternatives was based on a balancing of the transportation needs and policy goals for the Bay Area and the environmental effects, both of the project itself and of the various alternatives considered. Specifically, MTC considered the following in making its decision:

1. The transportation investments in the 2001 RTP best meet the six policy goals established by MTC for the long-range regional transportation plan as listed above.
2. In particular, the mobility and access improvements in the 2001 RTP will contribute to maintaining a healthy regional economy and improving the quality of life through the diversity of investments contained in the Plan.
3. To the maximum extent possible, the 2001 RTP is consistent with and reflects adopted county transportation plans and priorities as well as voter approved local sales tax expenditure plans. These plans and priorities, in turn, reflect the input and concerns of county congestion management agencies, transit operators, local governments, and members of the public.
4. The transportation improvements, goals, and strategies proposed in the 2001 RTP were derived from an extensive regional public outreach effort lead by MTC, and they reflect broad public support. MTC's public outreach effort for the 2001 RTP was divided into two phases. Phase One consisted of more than 30 public workshops that were designed to explore why participants were drawn to support specific projects; to allow participants to discuss their transportation values, needs, and priorities; and to debate the merits of specific projects to be included in the 2001 RTP. This Phase One input led to the formulation of the draft RTP that was released for further review. Phase Two involved eight public workshops/hearings throughout the region on the Draft 2001 RTP released by the Commission on August 10, 2001. In addition, MTC conducted a web survey and received written and email comments on the draft RTP.
5. The 2001 RTP would improve mobility in 2025 as compared with the No Project Alternative:
  - The average travel time per trip would be reduced by 5 percent for work trips and 1 percent for non-work trips.
  - The accessibility of households to job opportunities within 15, 30, and 45 minutes by auto and by transit would be improved, ranging from 2 percent to 9 percent.
  - The number of daily vehicle trips in all travel corridors would be reduced except for modest increases in the Delta and Napa Valley corridors.
  - The amount of VMT at LOS F would be reduced by 15 percent on freeways and 14 percent on expressways and arterials.

6. The 2001 RTP will not interfere with the attainment and maintenance of federal and state air quality standards.
  - Reactive Organic Gases (ROG, an ozone precursor) decreases by 74 percent compared to today's emissions.
  - Nitrogen Oxides (NOx, an ozone precursor) decreases by 42 percent compared to today's emissions.
  - Carbon Monoxide (CO) decreases by 62 percent compared to today's emissions.
  - PM10 is lower in the Project than the No Project Alternative.
7. The 2001 RTP will support mobility between the Bay Area and neighboring regions by improving highway and transit through key interregional gateways, and thus contribute to the economic well being and quality of life for these areas as well as the Bay Area.

For the foregoing reasons, MTC finds that the 2001 RTP's benefits would outweigh, and therefore override, any adverse environmental impact that could potentially remain after mitigation measures are implemented to the extent feasible. In making this determination, MTC incorporates by reference the Findings of Fact set forth above, as well as all evidence cited therein.

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